

John D. Appleton House
325 South Grand River Avenue
Brighton
Livingston County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-235

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN D. APPLETON HOUSE

HABS No. MI-235

Location: 325 S. Grand River Avenue at the northeast corner of Spencer Rd. and South Grand River Avenue. Lot 59 of Section #1 of Noble's plat in the village (now city) of Brighton, Livingston County, Michigan

Present owner: Charles J. Kelly, 425 Spencer Rd., Brighton, Michigan

Present occupants: Renters

Present use: Residence and commercial use; storage

Significance: The home was built for and by John D. Appleton and has distinctive architecture. Appleton arrived in Brighton in 1839, where he became a carpenter and joiner.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: An exact date of construction cannot be placed on the building but it seems likely that it was built sometime between 1848, when the lot came into the possession of John D. Appleton, and 1855, when the lot was deeded to Diantha Jones for a consideration of \$1,200.00.
2. Architect: John D. Appleton
3. Builder, contractor, supplier: The house was built by and for John D. Appleton.
4. Original and subsequent owners:

B. Historical Context: John D. Appleton, the builder, came to Brighton in 1839 and earned his living as a carpenter and joiner. He built this home which was close by the Presbyterian Church and later built a large "public house" opposite the Brighton Hotel. This was known locally as the "Appleton Block." The Kelley family, into whose hands the home came in the mid-1880's, were substantial citizens of Brighton. The first Kelley, Aaron H. Kelley, arrived in Brighton in 1837 from Dixboro, Michigan and built a water-powered saw mill which Kelley operated for some time.

He was an early merchant of Brighton and owned a farm near there. The site of the J. D. Appleton house was that of the first store in Brighton built by William Nobla, Jr.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A mid-19th century village house of formal composition, with interesting modifications of classical details. Although altered, this building represents a type of facade considered unique to Michigan.
2. Condition of fabric: Older portions are fair to good; recent portions are in good condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The original portion is 38'-10" wide by 36'-6" in depth, plus a portico 8'-3" by 22'-8 1/2", and a rear wing 16'-8" wide by 12'-2" in depth. The front is five bays wide, each one-story wing taking up one bay. The front faces west.
2. Foundations: Walls are rubble about 1'9" thick, extending below frost line; only a little shows above grade. Most exterior surfaces have been stuccoed within recent times.
3. Walls: Exterior walls are framed with corner posts and intermediate posts about 8" by 8"; these project into the interior. Intermediate studding is of 4" by 4" and 2" by 4" members, with corner braces of 4" by 4" pieces. The larger timbers are mortised and pegged together. The exterior facing may have been shiplap, though it is now covered with asbestos composition shingles.
4. Structural framing: First-floor joists are 7"-diameter poles hewn on top; they are laid longitudinally (E-W) and are spaced about two feet on centers. A hewn girder 9" wide by 7" deep extends transversely several feet to the rear of center. Sills are hewn, 8" wide by 7" deep. Second-floor joists are 2" by 8" spaced 1'3" to 1'5" on centers. Rafters of the portico and wings are poles 3-1/2" in diameter, hewn on top, spaced about two feet on centers.

5. Portico and porches: The columns are square in plan 1'-10 1/2" to 1'-11" wide at the bottom, tapering to 1'-6" at the top. They are 14'-10" high and have no base. The capital is angular Ionic, freely modified from Greek prototypes. The abacus covers only half of each volute, leaving room for a painted iron acanthus leaf to cover the outer half. The cushions are curved; at the center each bears a small five-part leaf motif. Elements of the egg-and-dart band are continued. Each face of the column is constructed of board 1 3/4" thick; while each comprises the whole width, it does not extend the entire height. On the outer and inner face there is a 2'-2" piece at the bottom; on the side faces there is a similar short piece at the top. Corners are not mitred; boards extend the full width of the inner and outer faces, their edges showing on the side faces. Pilasters (antae) on the house wall respond to the corner columns. Each has a base consisting of a plinth, a narrow recessed fascia and a cavetto. The capital consists of a fillet, ovolo, fillet, fascia and crowning cavetto. The pilaster shafts are slightly tapered, and average 1'-8 3/4" in width, respectively.

The entablature of the portico consists of a plain architrave crowned by an ovolo between fillets, a plain frieze, bed moulding and cornice. The bed moulding consists of a cove, with projecting fillet at the lower edge, and a 3/4-round quirked moulding at the upper edge. In the cornice is a corona terminated by a fillet and ovolo, and a crowning cavetto. The corners of the pediment divide in the orthodox manner. The whole entablature continues along the rake in the pediment, leaving a small triangular area now faced with composition shingles.

The porch ceiling, above a wide architrave, is of boards about 5 1/2" wide; the joists which support them are 1" boards spaced about two feet apart. The present porch floor is concrete, as are the steps up to the central bay.

6. Chimneys: One chimney somewhat south of the center extends a short distance above the roof; it extends at the lower end to several feet below the ground line. It is of relatively modern construction but may replace an

older chimney. It contains a fireplace, now closed up, on the first story. Another chimney forms a part of the north one-story addition.

7. Openings: a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance, which is on the main axis of the facade, is framed by wide paneled trim. That to the jamb has a base similar to the pilasters, and tapers in width from 1'-2 1/4" at the bottom to 1'-1/4" at the top. Corner blocks at the top contain a recessed square panel and a recessed circular panel within it, which contains a five-part rosetta in low relief. At the center along the head of the opening is a three-part key block. Within the frame just described is a splayed opening containing a door, transom and side light; these are separated by wooden bars 5 1/2" wide, of a design similar to the outer trim (corner blocks included). The door, 3' by 6'-7 1/2" by 1 3/4", contains a horizontal panel below and a vertical panel (now glazed) above; stile and rail are very wide. Each panel is framed by 3 1/2" band consisting of an outer fillet and a cyma reversa, rather backed on the inner edge; at each corner is a block, plain except for a recessed panel. In the lower door panel is a rhombus in relief against an oblong in relief. Below each side light is a single moulded panel with raised field. Glazing of side lights and transom is modern; the original sash, containing red glass, are still in the possession of the owner.

Other exterior doorways are all relatively modern. One glazed door in the bay just to the left of the entrance was installed in place of an original window.

- b. Windows: Full windows, on the first story and under the portico on the second story, have simple architrave trim (two fascias) which is pitched to an apex at the head. Small windows in the frieze of both long sides, characterized the second story; there are three on the north and two on the south. Sash have been replaced throughout; some old casements, perhaps from the second story, are still in the possession of the owner.
8. Roof:
- a. Shape, covering: The roof of the two-story portion is gabled and there are shed roofs over the side wings. The present covering is partly asphalt

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composition shingles and partly roll roofing. The rafters are sheathed with wide boards. Modern sheet metal gutters are in place. There are no dormers.

- b. Cornice: The entablature of the portico continues as a house cornice along the high portion; there are returns at the corners of the east gable. On the facade of the wings are remains of a moulded taenia with a guttae course below it. Eaves project slightly at the edge of the wings.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: Originally there was a central entrance and stair hall with two rooms on each side connected by wide openings, and a rear kitchen wing on the north side. Alterations have been made.
- b. Second floor: Alterations to this story make the original arrangement problematical. This story extends over the central portion of the building behind the pediment. Perhaps there was a single room across the front, and the rear was divided into two smaller L-shaped rooms with the hall in the center.

- 2. Stairways: A straight flight of stairs (14 risers) ascends from just inside the front entrance. It was originally of the open-well type with an open string on one side, with two 5/8" by 7/8" plain balusters per tread, simple moulded handrail, octagonal newel shaped somewhat like a baluster, and moulded nosing. The lower end of the other side projected part-way across a wide opening. Now a closet on one side and a partition on the other make this virtually an enclosed stair. A short section of railing remains at the second story. A simple basement stair, no longer used, is under the main one, and appears to be modern.
- 3. Flooring: Floors were single tongue-and-groove, of 1" boards 6" wide on the first floor and up to 10" wide on the second floor. They have in recent years been covered with other boards and linoleum.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceiling were plastered on wood lath (boards chopped and "expanded"). Many walls have been covered with vertical boards, and ceilings with composition material, during recent alterations. Other surfaces have been papered. Openings which have been closed off in part. Trim

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are several original wide is 6" wide, moulded, of the "pilaster" type, with corner blocks which contain a square boss having the same moulded profile. The only old doors are those on the second story. They are 2'-8" by 6'-7" by 1 3/8", with two vertical panels with raised fields on both faces unmoulded.
- b. Windows: The windows which have not been altered have the same trim that extends to the floor, leaving a single panel below the stool.

6. Hardware: No original hardware appears to remain.

7. Mechanical equipment:

- a. Heating: There is no indication of original heating, although the position of the remaining chimney suggests the probability that were used. There is one fireplace, no closed up.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: This house occupies a lot at the northeast corner of South Grand River Avenue and Spencer Road, in a residential neighborhood close to the business center of Brighton. Nothing remains it indicate any original landscaping.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources: Abstract of Title in the possession of Charles J. Kelley, 25 Spencer Rd., Brighton, Michigan.

2. Secondary and published sources:

History of Livingston County, Everts and Abbott, Philadelphia, 1880.

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